

Connecticut General Assembly
Appropriations Subcommittee on Elementary & Secondary Education
Public Hearing
March 3rd, 2014

Thank you Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Committee for giving me the opportunity to speak. My name is Pamela Dunn and I am a new resident of Hamden Connecticut, formerly of Litchfield County. I am a single mother and exclusive caregiver to my children.

My three sons are in elementary, middle and high school. They have all natural curiosities of children; they are bright and determined, inquisitive and impetuous, they thrive in structure and blossom easily with guidance and opportunity.

My two older children were identified early as both Gifted and Special Needs; the source of many struggles in a variety of school environments we attempted. My oldest Son has Aspergers Syndrome and had a vigorous IEP until this year. My middle son has a more complex diagnosis of ADD, OCD and a pervasive Tic Disorder and has been governed by a 504 Plan.

I could not find an environment that suited them in our State's public school system, and we faced both personal, and all too public, nightmares. Know only, that I had a child facing institutionalization mid-year in second grade, before I brought him home to school in my care. When my second child began struggling in 4th grade, I did the same, and the third followed shortly after.

My sons are ravenously intelligent kids, they were extremely successful and motivated learners in the home school environment and well exceeded their grade levels in nearly all subjects. What I learned, first hand, is that their self esteem was more directly linked to their ability to strategize, problem solve and achieve independently; more so than any praise that I could offer them. I learned that structure, stability and expectations were the framework in which they best performed. With the right tools, support and a gentle prod in the right direction, they were unstoppable.

In 2014 I discovered CREC, researched CREC, went to numerous open houses and heard education presented with the same priorities and standards I had come to find so valuable in my own home schooling environment. And although I knew we would be facing a daunting commute, I applied all three, and the oldest two received placements through the 2014 lottery.

My oldest son is currently thriving at MPTPA. Having just started there, at the beginning of his 9th grade year, his IEP was removed within weeks of his arrival. He is no longer a full-time, para-assisted student. He is completely independent with no modifications. In the CREC environment, he is in 4 Honors classes and an AP tutorial, in addition to his regular class load. He received Honors with Distinction, a 4.0, this past marking period. My younger, math-gifted, son is a 6th grade Honor Roll student at AAE, taking an 8th grade math class, and still he is given the support he needs in his less advanced subject areas. Forgive the obvious statement, but I am so PLEASED with CREC.

I think CREC approaches education as a basic necessity, if not a fundamental right of all children. They don't drill the content of what they teach as much as teach: how to learn, how to think, how to problem solve and how to develop strategies and solutions for learning as well as life's challenges. CREC encourages purposeful thought and inspires the further pursuit of knowledge. I believe a CREC education helps children develop the ability to think independently, and understand what it means to take personal responsibility and be accountable for their choices and actions as individuals and in society. I trust my CREC magnet schools to provide the first and longest lasting influence on the individual: an education.

You can't demand miracles, you can't even expect they will come from hard work, determination and prayer. But, still they happen every single day. My Magnets schools are my miracles, they have given my children the gift of an education I only dreamed for them.

Thank you, again, for allowing me this opportunity.